

All People Support Environmental Stewardship; Working Together We Achieve Great Victories

For too long now environmental stewardship has been painted as “us” vs. “them” – “us” traditionally defined as environmentalists aligned with the Democrat Party and the “them” being anyone having a business affiliation and/or viewpoint in line with the Republican Party. Both “sides” are passionate in their positions; both sides freely use doomsday adjectives and scenarios to back up their perceptions.

This form of combative discourse can only lead to one conclusion – people becoming disenfranchised from the very same communities in which they reside, work and play. Overlooked is a simple fact: Nobody – Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative, pro-business or pro-environment – advocates destroying the only place we call home.

Developers are not the enemy – they provide necessary housing and jobs. Environmentalists are not the enemy – their advocacy gives balance to the decisions reached by policymakers. As Third District supervisor, I try to bring all sides together to hopefully reach an acceptable consensus. As an active, registered Republican, I take offense when I hear naysayers accuse my party of destroying the environment when it was Republican presidents who signed into law the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, created the EPA, and got through Congress legislation that created Yellowstone and other magnificent parks.

Together, without labels, we Americans do wonderful things. We recognize our faults, correct our mistakes, plan for a better future for our children and their children. We are not afraid to admit when we are wrong. We are probably the most self-examining people on Earth. For instance, a presidential commission studying the health of our oceans (quite important here in San Diego!), commissioned by a Republican president and led by a retired admiral who led the Energy Department under a previous Republican president, has issued recommendations that we are already embracing here in our coastal communities.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, halfway through an 18-month study, reveals what many who live and work along the seashore (just think about the thousands of jobs here in San Diego County) already know – we need a new strategy to protect and enhance our oceans. Wetlands need preservation and expansion, overfishing must end, and invasive species must be stopped (remember *Caulerpa taxifolia*, the salt-water alga that made its way into Carlsbad's Agua Hedionda Lagoon?).

More important is how we as policymakers bring about these reforms. The commission found the federal government alone has more than 140 ocean-related laws being administered by 20 agencies and commissions, which often find themselves in conflict with each other over funding, direction and policies. Now add the state, county and local jurisdictions' involvement and one can understand why people quickly become frustrated.

We recognize our coastline needs attention. This week, SANDAG's Shoreline Preservation Committee will review the results of the first year of regional beach sand renourishment project as well as work to restore and

protect nearshore habitat. Working together, members of the shoreline coalition have overcome bureaucratic as well as natural obstacles to make San Diego County a leader in beach preservation.

Together, without labels, we will protect the quality of life here in our beautiful county. Great things are occurring because people are working toward common goals. It makes me proud to be a San Diegan.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH ...

This week the Board of Supervisors will take up two requests to earmark funds for community projects in the Third District. The first is a request for \$10,000 for First Night, the annual New Year's Eve celebration in downtown Escondido. The second is a \$500 submittal from the Solana Beach Historical Society for a special marker and tree planting. If approved, both requests will be funded through my Community Projects budget, which is designed to reinvest monies back into communities for worthwhile projects and programs.

WANTED: CONSERVING IDEAS ...

Are you concerned about preserving our native habitat? Then keep open Nov. 19 and 20. One of those days will be when San Diego County hosts "Conservation and the Working Landscape: A Forum on Incentives." Representatives from federal, state and local government agencies will be joined by leaders of the tribal nations, non-profit organizations and others interested in finding meaningful free-market incentives to encourage species and habitat conservation. Recommendations emerging from this all-day conference will be used as guidelines for further development of the North County and East County Multiple Species Conservation Programs.

NOTED OCCASIONS...

My condolences go to the family and friends of Aileen Saunders Mellott, one of our nation's top aviators who co-founded the Flying Samaritans organization. The 25-year resident of Escondido was the group's first president. She passed away at age 76 from cancer. The Flying Samaritans today has 12 chapters in California, Arizona and Baja California, where they help operate 22 rural medical clinics.

LAST WEEK AT THE COUNTY...

They are often the first line of defense, the first on the scene, the first to put themselves at risk. "They" are San Diego County's rural fire departments, which often lack the equipment and technology available today. These agencies will receive a \$500,000 to better prepare their personnel to deal with nuclear, biological or chemical attacks under a proposal unanimously passed last week by the Board of Supervisors. The funding will be used for specialized training (\$100,000), special equipment, including protection suits and trailers to move emergency supplies (\$110,000), and \$290,000 for fire trucks to be equipped with the latest in biohazard safeguards. ... The board also unanimously approved \$2,500 for distribution of 10,000 instructional cards to inform parents what to do in the case of a missing child. They will be disbursed through libraries, sheriff's stations and family resource centers.

Finally, the board gave authority to the Department of Housing and Community Development to sign contracts to manage 530 low- and moderate-income units, including 428 in the 4S Ranch project in Carmel Mountain Ranch and 52 in Orchard Run development in Valley Center.

THIS WEEK AT THE COUNTY...

A light agenda begins with a topical – some would call it controversial – issue: Should San Diego County recognize a person's right to grow or possess marijuana for medicinal purposes. The county will consider

whether to follow a proposed ordinance by the City of San Diego, which would allow an individual to grow three dry pounds of marijuana annually. How much is three pounds? That equals about 2,600 marijuana “cigarettes,” or between seven and eight cigarettes smoked daily. I have many difficulties supporting such a loosely written plan at a time when the Board of Supervisors is doing everything possible to discourage children from smoking regular tobacco.

Other items on Tuesday’s agenda include:

- Acceptance of a \$42,946 state grant to assist the Health and Human Services Agency in its efforts to prevent the elderly from committing suicide.
- Support for state legislation making the possession of child pornography a felony, and to seek a member of the San Diego delegation to carry the bill proposal next year in the Legislature.
- Requests for funding administered through the federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program.
- Funding request from rural fire districts for one-time funding to replace equipment, including fire engines, destroyed or damaged during the Pine and Fallbrook conflagrations.

Wednesday’s meeting on land-use issues contains several worthwhile items to point out:

- Feasibility of establishing the “Colonia” status for the U.S. side of Tecate. This designation helps a region to determine potential land use and funding sources for future improvements.
- Establishment of guidelines for any recall of members sitting on the planning groups throughout the unincorporated regions. This proposal will require any such recall be done through the ballot, and not the Board of Supervisors.
- Set November hearings for the acquisition of properties under the county’s Multiple Species Conservation Program. The proposed sites are 61 acres in Lakeside and 75 acres in the Tijuana Valley floodplain.